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ABSTRACT

This position paper was prepared by the New Futures Collaborative, a group of community leaders concerned with improving outcomes for at-risk youth and families in the Dayton (Ohio) community. It is evident that for some individuals, there has been a value shift and devaluation of human life. A small but growing number of youth are committing violent offenses, and a significant number are witnessing violence and drug transactions on a daily basis. The past decade has seen dramatic increases in both single-parent families and the number of children living in poverty. Recommendations of New Futures are grouped into the following categories: (1) parental accountability and support; (2) safety and security; (3) youth guidance and development; (4) school renewal; (5) user friendly health and human services; (6) youth employability and out-of-school youth; and (7) safe and supervised recreation. These recommendations involve developing a system of accountability and support for youth and families, with special efforts for single parents and for preventing teen pregnancy. Using community policing, conflict management training, and effective law enforcement to create safe communities is a necessity. A supportive adult role model for each child and youth must be a goal. (SLD)

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POSITION STATEMENT ON

YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION

AND

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Adopted by New Futures Collaborative
January 14, 1993

New Futures for Dayton Area Youth

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Guests in attendance at January 14, 1993 meeting

Leon Allen, Concerned Christian Men
Tom Bedell, Concerned Christian Men
Rev. Calvin Bright, East Dayton Church of the
Brethren
Richard Clay Dixon, Mayor, City of Dayton
James Green, Concerned Christian Men
Dr. Rodney Hammond, Wright State Univ.
John Moore, Dayton Foundation, Parity 2000
Judge Michael Murphy, Mont. Co. Juvenile Court
Chief James Newby, Dayton Police Dept.
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NEW
FUTURES
FOR
DAYTON
AREA
YOUTH

January 19, 1993

MEMORANDUM

TO: Community and Neighborhood Leaders

FROM: Jim Van Vleck, Chair
New Futures Collaborative

SUBJECT: Preventing Youth Violence

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The recommendations contained in this document were drawn from the knowledge base New Futures has developed over the past five years. In preparing this position paper, our staff sought input from the Youth Advisory Council; the New Futures Community Associates, who work directly with youth and families; Collaborative members; Service Brokers and other interested individuals. Statistics were taken from 1990 Census data; student data from the Dayton Public Schools and the State of Ohio; and service statistics provided by Juvenile Court, Children Services Board and the Human Services Department. Without the cooperation of many people, this report would not have been possible.

New Futures in Dayton would also like to acknowledge the Annie E. Casey Foundation and our New Futures colleagues in Bridgeport, Pittsburgh, Savannah and especially Little Rock for sharing ideas, resources and solutions.

New Futures for Dayton Area Youth

POSITION STATEMENT ON YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Adopted January 14, 1993

This position paper on Youth Violence Prevention was prepared by the New Futures Collaborative, a group of community leaders concerned with improving outcomes for the at risk youth and families of this community. New Futures, supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and 25 local funders, has worked for more than five years to increase collaboration and bring about change in the community's youth serving organizations.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

- For some individuals in our community there has been a major value shift and a devaluation of human life. This value shift is being passed down from adults to the younger generation.
- A small but growing number of youth are committing violent offenses.
- The vast majority of our young people are law abiding citizens, but a significant number are witnessing violence and drug transactions in their homes and in the community on a daily basis.
- The past decade has seen dramatic increases in both the number of youth growing up in single parent families at all economic levels, and in the number of children living in poverty in our community.

SUMMARY OF NEW FUTURES RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop a system of accountability and support for all youth and families in the community, with special efforts aimed at single parent families and preventing teen pregnancy.
2. Utilize community policing, conflict management training and effective law enforcement to create safe and secure environments for y uth and families.
3. Provide a supportive adult role model for each child and youth in our community.

SUMMARY OF NEW FUTURES RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)
4. Involve youth in developing and implementing solutions to community problems and issues.
5. Continue and intensify efforts to make school a place of success for every child.
6. Personalize the delivery of health and human services and employment and training services; design services to focus on the whole family; deliver services in schools, in public housing sites, in recreation and community centers.
7. Develop an effective "second chance" employment and training system and jobs for unemployed, out of school youth.
8. Provide more free/affordable, safe recreation opportunities for youth in the community.

"Unfortunately, too few adults invest the personal time and effort to encourage, guide and befriend young people who are struggling to develop the skills and confidence necessary for a successful and satisfying adult life. Too few communities encourage and recognize community service by young people. And too few offer programs and activities to promote healthy adolescent development... As a result, many young people believe they have little to lose by dropping out of school, having a baby as an unmarried teenager, and committing crimes."

-Beyond Rhetoric

The National Commission on Children

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New Futures for Dayton Area Youth

POSITION STATEMENT ON YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Adopted January 14, 1993

Preamble

The brutal murders which occurred over Christmas in Dayton have sent shockwaves through this community. Six people are dead and four young people are in custody awaiting judicial hearings. The New Futures Collaborative shares the community's alarm and outrage over the escalating violence in our community. Formed in 1988, the New Futures Collaborative is a group of government, business, health and human service, education and neighborhood leaders concerned with improving outcomes for youth who are at risk of not growing into self-sufficient adults. The Collaborative seeks to create the conditions for youth success by raising the community's awareness of youth issues and by advocating for needed changes in youth serving organizations.

For the past four and one-half years New Futures has funded a group of youth and family advocates. The advocates, known as Community Associates, are currently working with students kindergarten through grade twelve and their families in nine Dayton Public Schools. New Futures has also helped to establish management information systems which enable the schools, the Community Associates and the Collaborative to keep track of student progress.

This position paper on youth violence prevention has been prepared by New Futures to share what we have learned over the past five years with other community leaders and with interested members of the Dayton community. More than 142,000 young people under 18 live in Montgomery County. A small, but growing number of youth are violent offenders. The vast majority of young people in our community are law abiding citizens, but poverty, isolation and regular exposure to violence within their homes and neighborhoods puts significant numbers of our children and youth very much at risk. It is to all of our children, youth and families in need that we must direct the community's attention.

Statement of Need

Despite a strong national economy during the 1980's, poverty increased and the earning power of young families declined. The structure of the American family has changed dramatically during the past two decades. The 1990 Census reports that single parent families account for 38% of all families with children in Montgomery County and 45% of all families with children in the City of Dayton.

Welfare rolls are higher now than ever before. 35,000 children in Montgomery County - one in four of the County's children - live in AFDC families as of January, 1993. In many two parent families, both spouses work. For a variety of economic and social reasons many of our community's families are living in poverty and/or are stressed by the burdens of single parenthood. Poverty in and of itself doesn't cause crime and violence, but prolonged poverty has destroyed hope for many families caught in its multi-generational cycle.

As a society we are bombarded daily by direct and indirect acts of violence. Many of our youth live in homes and communities where violent behavior is the norm. This is not confined to impoverished families or neighborhoods only, but cuts across our total community. Many youth who engage in violent behavior come from homes with limited parental supervision and involvement in their lives, with a history of school failure, with few opportunities for constructive recreation or employment experiences and lack positive, consistent role models. Youth are more likely to abuse drugs or alcohol or engage in violent behavior if the significant adults around them are themselves abusers. This is an intergenerational issue, involving both youth and adults and the entire family.

Many of our community's youth are witnessing violence and drug transactions on a daily basis in their homes and neighborhoods. Younger and younger children are exposed to violence regularly and live in environments where the sound of gunshots is a nightly occurrence. For some individuals in our community there has been a major value shift and a devaluation of human life. We must intervene and change that value with the younger generation. We cannot stand by and allow it to continue or grow. Too many of our children are besieged by complex problems which have been allowed to develop and grow worse each year. There are no simple or singular solutions. Building more prisons will not eliminate these problems and reclaim the lives of these young people and their families. As adults we must send a strong message to all the youth of this community by words and action that "we care about what happens to you."

We urge the Greater Dayton community to turn the tragedy of the Christmas murders into a serious, long term commitment to action on behalf of all the at-risk children and families of this community.

Recommendations

PARENTAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND SUPPORT

FACT: Chronic absenteeism from school starts as early as Kindergarten for some students and contributes to school failure, retention in grade and ultimately dropping out of school.

FACT: In Montgomery County, 12 households headed by an unmarried teen mother are formed each week.

FACT: 74% of Dayton families and 64% of Montgomery County families with children under 5 headed by a single female live in poverty according to the 1990 Census.

Parents must provide adequate supervision and support for their children. They must be actively involved in all aspects of their child's life and provide the adult guidance necessary for healthy development and sound values. In turn, the broader community should support and assist parents in fulfilling their responsibilities.

1. Juvenile Court, in conjunction with the schools, Children Services Board and the police, need to review and revise their policies and practices to ensure that parents take responsibility for their children. These organizations, working with the community, need to develop a three part system of parental education, family support and appropriate consequences which focus on the parent as well as the youthful offender. Parents must be held accountable for ensuring that their children attend school regularly beginning with kindergarten.

2. Parents, schools, churches, health care providers and youth serving agencies must work together and increase current efforts to prevent teen pregnancy by providing:
   - age appropriate sexuality training;
   - motivation to teens to avoid too-early sexual activity and pregnancy;
   - accessible health care that includes general health, mental health and reproductive health care.

3. Provide high quality child care programs modeled on Head Start for high risk infants and toddlers living in areas of persistent poverty and make it available to those families whether or not the mother is employed or in a training program.

4. The Combined Health District in conjunction with the Hospitals, the Medicaid HMOs, the schools, the Human Services Department and the agencies who serve pregnant and parenting teens needs to develop a system to identify, monitor and support teen parents and their babies to insure:
   - appropriate pre-natal care;
   - adequate nutrition;
   - well baby care and immunizations;
   - general health care and reproductive health care;
   - quality child care;
   - school re-entry and continuation;
   - parent education and support, which includes parenting for peaceful families training;
   - a quality pre-school experience;
   - case management to address other needs.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

FACT: 43% of Dayton middle school students and 23% of Dayton high school students reported students fighting at school to be a regular problem in the 1990-91 student survey.

FACT: 30% of Dayton middle school students and 25% of Dayton high school students reported "someone being robbed" or "something being stolen" at school to be a regular problem in the 1990-91 survey.

FACT: From 1988-1991 juvenile assault charges in Montgomery County increased by 218%; juvenile rape charges increased 212%; juvenile aggravated robbery charges increased 300%.

Children and families must feel safe and secure in their homes, neighborhoods and schools. Alcohol, drugs, crime and violence have turned certain neighborhoods into "war zones."

5. Involve youth in developing strategies to make their neighborhoods, schools and parks safer places to live, learn and play.

6. Develop and implement creative approaches to reducing the sheer number of guns within the community.

7. Increase police protection and provide traffic control within neighborhoods experiencing high levels of violence and drug dealing.

8. Expand community policing and engage neighborhood residents in dialogue to build a base of mutual respect between the police and neighborhood residents in high crime areas.

9. The ADAMHS Board and its contract agencies, the schools, family and youth serving agencies, the Health District, the Head Start Programs, the Medicaid HMOs and the universities need to come together to address the huge and largely unmet need for general mental health, guidance and counseling to address anger, abuse and emotional distress among the children and adolescents of this county. A major initial target of intervention should be those children and youth exposed to violence on a recurring basis.

10. Expand the City's Neighborhood Mediation Program, peer mediation training within the schools and the Positive Adolescent Choices Training (PACT) Program currently at Roth Middle School so that significantly larger numbers of youth, parents, teachers, clergy, and health and human service workers are trained and skilled at conflict resolution.

11. Reduce the number of liquor licenses in areas such as West Dayton which are over saturated with such establishments; separate alcohol sales from neighborhood convenience and drive through locations.

12. Wrest control of violence prone DMHA housing sites from the drug dealers and other criminals.

YOUTH GUIDANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

FACT: 49,082 children under 18 in Montgomery County in 1990 lived with one parent, other relatives or non-relatives. This represents one-third of the children in Montgomery County and over one-half of the children in the City of Dayton.

FACT: Young people care deeply about this community and are a largely untapped resource of energy, enthusiasm and ideas.

Every youth must have a supportive adult for guidance. Youth want adults to care about them, treat them with respect and serve as role models. Some ;youth need the periodic guidance of a volunteer mentor, others with more serious needs, require the support of a full time advocate. They also want a "voice" in their school and in their neighborhood, and they want opportunities to work together with adults to tackle problems facing this community.

13. Provide youth-oriented staff at the elementary, middle and high school levels, and in the community for out of school youth, who are committed, trained and empowered to:
    - assess student needs;
    - serve as a bridge between home, school and the community;
    - connect the student and family with appropriate community resources;
    - serve as a role model and an accessible source of advocacy and support for young people.

14. Youth serving agencies, the schools, local churches, colleges and universities and area businesses should work together to develop a process for recruiting and matching volunteers with youth who need and can benefit from the involvement of a volunteer mentor.

15. Provide leadership training to youth, and establish an ongoing process for building active youth participation in shaping public policy within Dayton and Montgomery County (e.g., New Futures Youth Advisory Council, Youth Priority Boards, etc.).

16. Develop and support programs which involve young people in community service projects such as peer mediation and mentoring and tutoring of younger children.

SCHOOL RENEWAL

FACT: Approximately 1 in 4 Dayton middle and high school students miss at least six weeks of school each year.

FACT: Chronic absenteeism is a symptom of multiple problems, not just a school issue or problem.

FACT: In the three year period between 1988-89 and 1990-91, 25% of Dayton 7th - 10th graders fell one or more grade levels behind.

FACT: During the 1990-91 school year, 570 Dayton 7th - 12th grade students were suspended two or more times. These students accounted for 37% of the total students suspended but 63% of total reported suspensions.

The schools need to continue and expand their efforts aimed at school renewal and transformation to ensure that every child is actively engaged in learning, that racial and economic inequities are eliminated, that each child is known and cared about by the adults that spend each day with him or her, and that each child is motivated to achieve.

17. School renewal should be characterized by:
    - Teaching which recognizes and supports multiple learning styles, and enables students to become life long learners;
    - Curriculum relevant to the student's life which challenges each to use critical thinking skills and is based on sound values;
    - Cross cultural and human relations training for students and school personnel;
    - School-based management and decision making.

18. The schools should review their current policies on suspensions and expulsions:
    - limit the use of school exclusion to only those offenses which pose serious danger to the staff and students of a school.
    - reinstitute in-school suspensions, which provide therapeutic as well as academic intervention.
    - ensure that structured, supervised alternatives are in place for those students who are suspended or expelled so they continue their education.
    - collaborate with Juvenile Court to require all suspended and expelled students to participate in such programs whether school- or community-based.

19. Provide transition programming for those students returning to regular classrooms from special educational programs, drug treatment, jail, long term absence, etc.

USER FRIENDLY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

FACT: 3,475 child abuse investigations were conducted by Montgomery County Children Services (CSB) in 1991.

FACT: 830 youth were living in out of home placements funded by CSB and Juvenile Court during 1991; $13.5M is spent annually on out of home placements by CSB, Juvenile Court and the mental health system.

FACT: 36% of middle school students attending Roth and Wilbur Wright were assessed by New Futures Community Associates as having two or more serious unmet needs.

FACT: 70% of all children living in poverty within Montgomery County live in the City of Dayton.

FACT: One third of all public school students in Montgomery County attend the Dayton Public Schools.

Many of the families and youth most affected by violence live in areas of persistent poverty. Those families who are most at-risk need intense, comprehensive, individualized services with aggressive attention to outreach and maintaining the relationship over time.

20. Health and human service agencies need to become more user friendly to those families living in persistent poverty and suffering the greatest distress by:
    - making services available in homes, in DMHA housing complexes, in schools and other community-based locations;
    - utilizing staff to deliver the services who reflect the demographics of the agency's clientele;
    - training staff to be comfortable with diversity, accepting of differences and culturally competent;
    - assigning staff in ways that allow continuity with families over time.

21. Families and youth with multiple needs often fall into the gray space between agencies. Because it's not always clear who is responsible, because communication among several agencies can be haphazard or non-existent and because each agency is often dealing with a family member rather than the whole family, significant resources may be expended without meeting the family's needs or having a positive result. This community needs:
    - a family-focused case management system empowered by the youth and family agencies to work across agency lines;
    - a system of service brokers to expedite services;
    - cross agency information systems that are user friendly and ensure accountability;
    - regular cross agency training for staff at all levels;
    - regular joint assessments, case conferencing and individualized service planning with families to meet their needs.

22. Montgomery County, through Community Human Services, United Way and the City of Dayton should target resources to geographic areas of greatest need within Dayton and Montgomery County. This impact effort would be further enhanced if the City and County and United Way would establish key service priorities (e.g., five family and youth service need areas) and make substantial dollar commitments for a specified block of time. A mapping process should be undertaken jointly by the City of Dayton, Montgomery County, New Futures and United Way to identify key service priorities.

YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY - OUT OF SCHOOL YOUTH

FACT: The percent of 9th graders who graduated with their class after four years was 67.3% for all high schools within Montgomery County and 42.7% for all Dayton high schools. (Of those who did not graduate with their original 9th grade class, some will take five or more years to graduate, some have transferred to other schools, and many of these students have dropped out.)

FACT: In 1990, 3,337 16-19 year olds in Montgomery County were not enrolled in school and had not graduated from high school. 67% of these youth were unemployed or not in the labor force.

Violence, hopelessness and despair occur when young people feel cutoff from the economic mainstream. School dropouts are no longer employable in the Dayton economy; many end up abusing drugs, in jail or on AFDC.

23. The Private Industry Council, in conjunction with the schools, local governments, businesses, colleges and universities, and community organizations, should develop a comprehensive, effective "second chance" education and training system and jobs for older youth who have dropped out of school or who have graduated but are un- or under-employed.

SAFE AND SUPERVISED RECREATION

Young people need safe and supervised opportunities to take healthy risks, enjoy their peers and have fun. The Dayton area needs more free or affordable and safe recreational activities and places for youth to go that are supported by the community.

24. Significantly increase the number of safe, structured and academically enriching after school programs for elementary and middle school students. Locate those programs in DMHA housing complexes and other areas of greatest need within the community. Encourage churches in high need areas to become after school youth activity centers.

25. Develop more organized and supervised activities for youth 16-19 years old in locations throughout the community; involve youth in planning and conducting the activities.

26. Expand and restructure City recreation programming to link with other agencies and to create youth and family resource centers within City recreation center sites.

NEW FUTURES FOR DAYTON AREA YOUTH

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James Van Vleck, Collaborative Chair
Kathleen J. Emery, Executive Director
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Associate Executive Director

NEW FUTURES MISSION:

To build permanent capacity within the community to create the conditions for youth success.

NEW FUTURES GOALS:

Through a public/private collaborative ensure that:
1) all young people come to school healthy and ready to learn;
2) the community and its schools are committed to the success of every child;
3) higher education and/or career opportunities are available to all Dayton area graduates.

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